

The Mass

SERVING AT THE ALTAR
(A MANUAL FOR ALTAR SERVERS)
CHAPTER THREE PAGE 17

It is important for each server to know the structure of the Mass. This is not merely a matter of knowing “what comes next”, but of understanding the meaning of each step in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy. The Mass itself is a drama, an action moving steadily forward to its supreme moments, when heaven and earth meet in the great mystery of the altar.

THE PARTS OF THE MASS AND THEIR MEANING

There are two (2) major parts in the structure of the rite of the Mass: the *Liturgy of the Word*, which leads to the *Liturgy of the Eucharist*. Before the Liturgy of the Word, there are the *Introductory Rites*. After the Liturgy of the Eucharist, there is the *Concluding Rite*.

A. INTRODUCTORY RITES

1. The ***Entrance Song*** – opens the celebration and accompanies the procession of the priest and the servers to the altar. It should be sung, to deepen our unity together and to introduce us to the mystery of the season of feast.

(Every weekday in our parish, this is not sung by the choir. Instead, we read the Entrance antiphon flashed on the screen (Ordinary Time), except for Feasts, Memorials, and Solemnities. The procession is also omitted since we are still in the pandemic unless the priest presider does so.)¹

2. ***Veneration of the Altar*** and ***Greeting of the People*** – comes after the entrance. As it is the sign of Christ Himself, center of the Church, and of the Eucharistic Assembly, the altar is shown reverence by three traditional gestures: the bow or the customary reverence, the kiss, and the incensation (when incense is used). The presider greets the assembly which reminds us that we are one, in the power and grace of God.

3. The ***Penitential Rite*** – invites us to be sorry for our sins and takes away venial or minor sins which do not need absolution in private confession. We come to God in a spirit of contrition, so that we may celebrate the Eucharistic worthily and grow in grace. The rite includes *“I confess, and Lord have mercy.”*

¹ Note no. 1 – What we usually do in our Parish (Our Lady of La Paz Parish Makati).

4. The ***Gloria*** is an ancient hymn of praise sung or recited in appropriate celebrations especially on the feasts and solemnities.
5. The ***Opening Prayer*** (also called the ***Collect***) – is introduced with an invitation to prayer and a time of silent prayer. On behalf of the people, the priest offers the prayer thus we all respond “*Amen.*”

B. THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

1. The ***first scripture reading*** on a Sunday or Solemnity is usually taken from the Old Testament.
(*Commonly known as First Reading*).
2. The ***Responsorial Psalm*** continues the theme of the reading or expresses the mood of the season or occasion. It should be sung as a “responsory”, that is, with the people making the responsive verse their own prayer and the cantor or the choir singing the psalm itself. It is incorrect to describe it as a “response to the readings.”
3. The ***second scripture reading*** on a Sunday or Solemnity is taken from any portion of the New Testament, which is not a Gospel, especially the letters of Saint Paul.

4. The *Alleluia* or *Gospel Verse* should be sung, our joyous welcome to the Word in the Gospel.
5. The *Gospel* is the major reading of the Liturgy of the Word. We stand to show our reverence for the words of Jesus Christ and the events of his life. Only an ordained minister may read the Gospel.
6. The *Homily* is an explanation and proclamation of the readings of the Liturgy.
7. The *Profession of Faith* or the *Creed* is our act of Faith, our assent to the teachings of Christ in the Church.
8. The *Prayer of the Faithful* or *General Intercession* offers the petitions of the community before God.

C. THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

1. The *Preparation of the Gifts* (offertory to Prayer over the Gifts). The bread and wine which God has given to us is given back to God, from whom everything comes.

2. The ***Eucharistic Prayer*** is a prayer of thanksgiving, a prayer of consecration, a priestly prayer of sacrifice. There are various steps in this greatest prayer of the liturgy:

- a. In the ***Preface*** the priest leads us in offering thanks to God.
- b. In the ***Sanctus***, we all praise the Holy Trinity, “Holy, holy, holy Lord...we kneel for the central words of the Eucharistic prayer.
- c. At the ***epiclesis***, the priest extends his hands over the gifts and asks the Holy Spirit to change them into the Body and Blood of Christ.
- d. The ***narrative of institution*** is the form of words, taken from the Last Supper, used for the consecration. At this supreme moment of the Mass, the bread and wine are truly changed into the Body and Blood of Christ.
- e. At the ***elevation*** the priest shows us the Host and the Chalice, and we adore our Lord.
- f. An ***acclamation*** follows the consecration. We proclaim the Mystery of Faith, that we believe

in the Real Presence of Jesus and His sacrifice, Christ giving himself up for us.

- g. The priest continues the Eucharistic Prayer. In the ***anamnesis*** we remember the saving death and resurrection of our Lord, made present here and now through the Eucharist.
 - h. In the ***offering***, the priest expresses what is happening, that we offer Christ the victim to the Father, that we offer ourselves in Him the true Priest, that we become one in Christ.
 - i. The ***intercessions***, prayer for others, unite the Church on earth, in purgatory and in heaven to this One sacrifice, offered for the living and the dead, enriched by the prayers of Our Lady and the saints.
 - j. Finally, in the great ***doxology*** (praise of God), the priest raises the chalice and paten, the Body, and Blood of Christ, offering “through Him, with Him and in Him...and all the people respond with the Great “Amen”.
3. The ***Communion Rite*** begins with the Lord's Prayer, when we ask for “our daily bread the food for those who have been forgiven. In the ***rite of peace***, we beg for peace and unity in the Church and the

world. We show our love for one another, our preparation for Communion, by giving a sign of peace, as sign of true peace which our Lord gives us. While we pray to the Lord as ***“Lamb of God”*** the priest repeats the action of the Lord at the Last Supper by breaking the Host, so that the Sacred Food can be shared in Holy Communion. We who are many partake of the one bread (1 Cor.10:17). He places a particle of the Host in the chalice, an ancient custom which we may see as a sign of the unity of the Body and Blood of Christ who is alive and risen, present with us in the Eucharist. After a quiet prayer of preparation, the priest adores the Lord and shows us the broken Host, *“This is the Lamb of God...”* We respond by admitting we are not worthy to receive Him, but His grace will heal us. The short ***Prayer after Communion*** completes the Communion Rite. Brief announcements may follow.

D. THE CONCLUDING RITE

1. The presider gives the ***Blessing***, which may take a simple or solemn form. As we began the mass in the name of the Holy Trinity, so we conclude the Mass in the power of the Trinity, making the sign of the cross on our bodies, a sign of faith, of belonging to the Church.

2. The presider or the deacon in the ***Dismissal*** sends each of us into the world, loving and serving the Lord, living out the Eucharist we have offered and celebrated.

Serving at the Altar
(A Manual for Altar Servers)
© 2004 by MINISTRY OF ALTAR SERVERS
121 Arzobispo St., Intramuros, Manila
404-3891 / 527-7631 loc. 214

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purpose of guidance and notes for the Ministry of Altar
Servers in Our Lady of La Paz Parish Makati.

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